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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to address declining parental participation in school functions and activities at a middle school, along with a low level of parental involvement or interest in their children's education. A year-long parental involvement program was developed that encouraged parents to: (1) interact with their children and their children's teachers on a regular basis; (2) participate in class trips, assembly programs, and the parent-teacher organization (PTO); (3) provide a quiet place for their children to study and for parents to work with their children on a daily basis; and (4) meet with teachers and administrators to discuss problems and concerns. The program also provided--through a program newsletter, small group meetings, and workshops--information to parents about adolescent development, their roles as parents, and school policies. As a result of the practicum program, PTO membership and attendance at PTO meetings increased, and parent participation in school committees rose significantly. Over the course of the program, discipline problems within the school declined, while student grades and self esteem improved. (Seven appendices contain copies of parent survey forms, homework logs, and parenting materials. Contains 17 references.) (MDM)

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Increasing Parental Involvement at a Middle School by Involving Parents in Workshops and School Activities Designed to Meet the Needs of Their Adolescent Child

by

John Kenneth Amato

Cluster 44

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A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

Nova Southeastern University

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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May 10, 1994

Date

This practicum report was submitted by John Kenneth Amato under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

June 20, 1994

Date of Final Approval of Report

Mary Ellen Sapp

Mary Ellen Sapp, Ph. D., Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to proudly acknowledge Dr. Mary Ellen Sapp. Dr. Sapp has been a tower of strength and encouragement during very difficult times. Her warm encouragement and yet focused suggestions have allowed the writer to master this Herculean task. She is the epitome of a true professional. The writer will never forget her and will always hold her memory in the highest degree.

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Finally, I would like to thank my father and mother. To this day they give me inspiration for every challenge I dare to engage.

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Parental Involvement at a Middle School by Involving Parents in Workshops and School Activities Designed to Meet the Needs of Their Adolescent Child. Amato, John Kenneth., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program Child and Youth Studies. Elementary / Middle School / Preservice Teachers / PTA.

This practicum was designed to increase parental involvement for parents of middle school students. Increased parental involvement will improve the cognitive and affective domain of the adolescent. Parents were involved in varied workshops, implemented throughout the year, which were designed to improve understanding and remedy problems related to adolescent development.

Analysis of the data revealed that because of increased parental involvement, students improved their grades, their behavior and their self-esteem. Lines of communication improved between parents and the school.

Permission Statement

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May 10, 1994 — John Kenneth Amato

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting for the writer, in which this practicum took place, is a two-story, all brick, middle school in an average to upper socioeconomic K-12 public school district. The small suburban seaside district consisted of two kindergarten through grade 5 elementary schools, one housing approximately 550 students, while the other housed about 370 students; one middle school comprised of students in grades 6 through 8 with a population of 650; and one senior high school with an enrollment of 750 students.

The middle school, which was the focus of this practicum, employed 70 professional staff, 10 para-professionals, and 15 support staff, comprising one child study team, two guidance counselors, and two building administrators. The racial demographics for both students and faculty consisted primarily of white, middle class families.

The community, approximately one square mile in size, was densely populated, yet encompassed only the middle of the socioeconomic spectrum. Most of the citizens lived in upper middle-class single-family homes. About one-third of these working residents held professional positions or owned successful businesses. Another section of the community was skilled laborers and fishermen from hard-working family backgrounds. A small portion of the community existed at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Some of these families suffered from a variety of problems which included single-parent households, drug or alcohol-related problems, and dependency on societal agencies for ongoing support. Despite their difficulties, the parents and citizens were highly interested in insuring that the educational needs of the children were developed. These parents promoted this concept through individual and group-related participation and were not shy about voicing their opinion during public meetings. Support for the school was also reflected in the passing of nine of the last ten school budgets. This was outstanding considering the newly built elementary school had divided the entire community just three years earlier.

The community sponsored year-round recreational programs provided opportunities for all children and teens.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer was employed as the assistant principal of this middle school. The writer was accountable for implementing a number of school-related activities: enforcing the school rules; dealing with 95% of the discipline problems; ordering textbooks and special orders; promoting staff development; and organizing programs of in-service training for teachers. Other responsibilities included resurrecting and maintaining an active PTO; developing and implementing the team concept; implementing the advisor-advisee program at the middle school; scheduling assembly programs for all grade levels; and carrying out public relations for the middle school. Public relations involved the writer's monthly contact with three newspapers, one radio station, one cable station, a student newsletter, a PTO newsletter, and an administrator's newsletter. The writer was the co-author of a $75,000 three-year federal grant program, "Serve America," to promote community service that superseded racial, ethnic, gender, and intergenerational barriers.

Working with the PTO had consumed much time for the writer during school, after school hours, and on weekends. Yet this writer knew the important role parents play in the education of their children. Working within the parameters of the PTO had given the writer an extra opportunity to familiarize himself with many parent concerns. The PTO had been a silent partner for several years prior to the writer's appointment as

assistant principal. During the past year, the writer had been able to assemble a solid working group of 50 members, and approximately 160 total membership, an increase of 155 more than the preceding year. The writer anticipated additional paid and active members.

While the PTO involvement was of paramount importance, every day offered the writer a new adventure as an assistant principal. Some days, the writer had parents waiting at 6:45 a.m. upon entering the office. Teachers constantly walked into the office with an assortment of problems, often needing advice or a friendly person just to listen. If not the teachers with their many concerns, students came in with an equal array of problems. The writer listened and tried to resolve the issues to the satisfaction of all parties. In addition, the writer often addressed the concerns of the secretaries or paraprofessionals. Periodically, a member of the board of education would stop by to talk or just call to find an answer to a concern. On those occasions when the building principal or superintendent would walk into the writer's office, everything else became secondary. The writer received a great deal of intellectual stimulation and satisfaction from the job.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem, as experienced by the writer, involved poor parental involvement with middle school students. Many parents of middle school students were unaware how to approach new techniques of instruction, academic issues, related technology, along with the understanding of personal problems and social needs of their contemporary middle school adolescent.

Parents claimed they were afraid to help their children with homework because they were unfamiliar with new programs. For example, the writer's school had recently adopted a new math program called "Open Court." This program was specifically designed for the middle school student. The program used many math manipulatives, number cubes, number wheels, and calculators. Parents not involved with this new program were at a distinct disadvantage. Parents were unable to help their children with homework.

In addition to fearing the new math program, parents unfamiliar with the new computer card catalog in the library were also fearful of helping their children do research for reports or projects. Most parents expressed a fear of computers to the writer on almost every occasion. Few students had computers in their home because of financial hardship. This fear of new technology by the parents had hindered many students.

Many parents were unable to approach new techniques of instruction, nor were they aware of how to address the personal problems of their adolescent children. The social needs of the contemporary middle school child were quite different from those of the previous decade. Parental involvement at this level was essential, and parents felt uncomfortable, even embarrassed and sometimes guilty, when they entered the school. Other parents were made to feel insignificant by teachers or even administrators. These feelings of parental inadequacy, shyness, or resentment were readily visible to the writer.

The school made a modest attempt involve the parents. The attempt suffered due to a poor communication network. At the writer's middle school, the writer had continued to upgrade lines of communication between school and home. However, parental involvement at the middle school often decreased as the child progressed through the grades. Most parents lacked the encouragement and basic understanding of the issues and problems that supported their involvement with their children. Parents were void of a plan for pursuing an effective strategy to help their children.

There was an insufficient amount of support from parents at athletic games, school assemblies, class trips, and related PTO functions. Parents not in attendance found it difficult to relate to the recent emotional high or low experienced by their children.

Few parents helped when major school projects were required. These projects, like the science fair project were time consuming, tedious, long range, and thought provoking. Students unable to muster the necessary help from a parent were rarely involved in projects for the science fair.

Parents wanted to know and understand the academic portion of their children's work. They wanted to help with the new math, assist in writing that business letter, or in the research of a science project, but were seemingly unprepared to do so and admitted this to the writer at parent conferences.

In addition to the forementioned shortcomings, other problems were found. These included increases in single parent households, both parents working, or the youngest child syndrome. Based on the writer's observations, parents who did at one time participate with their older children, now feel that there was little to be gained by coming to a parent program. There were parents who seem to be totally uninterested in the school or in grade level programs, and some parents who appeared to be ignorant or poorly educated and somewhat intimidated by teachers and the entire school climate. This myriad of problems led to a situation in which the parents had not become as involved in the school as they could. To devise a program that would increase parental involvement at the middle school level, was the purpose of this practicum.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of this problem was documented by a number of sources: a) the membership of the PTO, at the writer's middle school, was supported by 160 families out of a possible 421 families; b) inspection of the visitation sign-in sheet, in the front office for parents entering the school, indicated only 6 visitations per month, a drop from 9 visitations per month last year.

In addition, c) teacher records of parent conferences averaged only 3 per month compared to 6 per month last year; d) the telephone log of recorded calls indicated an average of 4 calls to parents a month per teacher as compared to 7 calls per month last year; e) ticket sales at basketball games had declined almost 10% as compared to last year's sales.

Furthermore, f) no parent volunteered to serve on the bake sale committee or the assembly committee compared to last year with 4 parents per committee; g) the number of parents who volunteered for class trips and school projects decreased by 10% over the previous year; h) attendance at PTO meetings dropped to an average of 15 parents per meeting, compared to 50 parents per meeting over the past several years; i) guidance records indicated that contact with parents decreased 20% this past year as compared to last year; j) with permission granted to tape record 5 group interviews, 25 students, 12 teachers, and 36 parents agreed there

was a lack of parental involvement; k) the number of students who had been referred more than once for disciplinary reasons, increased to 12 per month as compared to 4 last year.

Causative Analysis

There seemed to be multiple reasons that had been directly or indirectly instrumental in causing the problem in the writer's school setting. First, communication from the school to the parent was limited by the amount of correspondence sent home on a regular basis. Likewise, parents rarely communicated with the school until they saw a problem. In other cases, the communication between the school, home, and social agencies designed to help and support the family was sometimes caught in bureaucratic red tape.

Second, some parents were insensitive to the academic and social needs of their adolescent children. Many parents forgot the difficult time they may have had as an eleven or twelve-year-old. Difficulties with peer relationships at this age are paramount to adolescents, often resulting in school work becoming secondary. Grades suffered because there was a friend in need, a meeting with a new club, or practice with the team. The importance of identification within a group or with friends became the primary focus of the child.

Third, as a result of recorded interviews held with the

writer, some parents felt intimidated when seeing all teachers during a team conference and were reluctant to discuss academic issues or express their views. Some parents with limited formal education felt inadequate when discussing academic problems, understanding test results, or interpreting standardized test scores. Parental uneasiness contributed to their inability to pursue further involvement in their children's overall education.

Fourth, parents were unable or unwilling to share school-related experiences with their adolescent. This manifested itself during class trips, long-range school projects, or participation in school-related activities.

Fifth, single parent households made it difficult for a single parent to attend and/or participate in school functions. Parental attendance at school functions was important to the child, demonstrating to the child that the parents were actively involved and supportive of their participation. About 37% of the students in the writer's building came from single-parent homes. In some cases (about 12%) a grandparent or distant relative was granted custody. Being sole provider made parent involvement (or the involvement by an aunt or grandparent) almost nonexistent. Parental participation was equally important for children in two-parent households.

Sixth, due to the fact that many parents in the community chose to maintain a middle-class lifestyle, approximately 300 families have dual incomes. The writer obtained this data by checking school records. In many cases, both parents were working.

Job demands often resulted in parents being unable to attend school functions or conferences.

Seventh, 4% of the school population were living in homes that were identified, through the substance abuse counselor, as having one parent, both parents, or a sibling involved in substance abuse, putting an additional strain on the parent-school relationship. In addition to substance abuse, data from the school social worker indicated that 6% of the student population suffered from either physical or emotional child abuse. The problem of physical or emotional abuse has not been properly addressed and the possibility exists that this situation escalates to friends and neighbors, and eventually into the school setting. Even when the problem was addressed, the school received little involvement or support from the parents.

Eighth, based on school records, group interviews, and conversations held with the school social worker, the writer determined that parents avoided coming to school for financially-related reasons. For example, 3% of the school population qualified for government subsidized free or reduced lunch. Some parents expressed reluctance to attend a school function because they were humiliated by being unable to purchase fashionable clothing for themselves and their children. Financial difficulties deterred them from attending a class trip with their children. Many parents were unable to afford to send their children on class trips, consequently parents chose not to attend themselves. Most schools, including the writer's, had funds available to cover the cost of a class trip for children unable to pay, but this seldom included monies for parent

involvement in such school-related activities. In addition, games, traveling expenses, night assemblies, requirements for the purchase of team shirts, and, in general, fund-raisers, further compounded the situation. Attending school functions became extremely difficult for parents who had recently lost their jobs, but had formerly been very active.

Ninth, a communication problem was evident. School records indicated that this problem existed on both the part of the teacher and the parent. In this case, the writer, as the building administrator, preferred that the teacher initiate the communication and continue making every effort to communicate with the parent. Parents often indicated to the writer, through informal conversation, that a rough tone of voice on the phone by school personnel, or a forgotten acknowledgement in the hallway was enough to discourage them from becoming more involved.

Tenth, in addition to the forementioned, there existed inadequate support from local social agencies. Although most social agencies made an earnest attempt to help everyone in need, they were already overburdened with budget cuts, loss of personnel, and increased work loads. Many communities assist the efforts of social agencies by supporting programs or school-related organizations. In the writer's school district, organizations such as these had difficulty being established or maintained.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Information concerning the importance of parental involvement when dealing with academics and with the social and behavioral growth of their adolescent children has been closely linked to student achievement, self worth, peer acceptance and general maturity for more than half a century. Student problems in these areas continue to be a paramount concern for teachers, administrators, parents and students themselves.

However, many parents have been unable to recognize or to address trouble at its infancy, nor have they received the help they needed. There exists an overwhelming amount of data related to parental involvement as it influences school achievement, self esteem, and the social and behavioral growth of the adolescent child.

D'Angelo and Adler (1991) suggested that one of the causes was that school districts have had difficulty establishing programs and maintaining programs that would help needy parents or families. Several programs in the writer's community have attempted to support varied problems, but budget cuts or lack of volunteers over-burdened a few, and then interest was lost.

Solomon (1991) detailed how a state department of education recognized the connection between parental involvement and academic success, but had been unable to continue many support programs or to reach the masses in need of their help. The writer of this practicum had made numerous attempts to seek help and

support from the state to no avail. The state department of education referred many problems to existing agencies.

Chrispeels (1991) identified areas of low self-esteem as a major factor for poor student/parent involvement. The lack of parental involvement was seen as a cause of low self esteem. Epstein (1991) supported indepth focus on low self esteem, since the cause of low self-esteem varied among different family lifestyles but directly related to poor or low parent involvement.

Davies (1991) highlighted poor parental support outside the school setting as an additional cause of poor student achievement. Parents were not taking children to the library, on family trips, visits to zoos and parks, and so forth. Parents did not provide any support or necessary help the child needed to finish homework assignments, class projects, or research. The writer's data on class trips, attendance at games, and low volunteerism supports Davies' findings.

Henderson (1988) found that single-parent households often caused unnecessary depression on the part of the student, producing low self-esteem and poor grades. The problem was verified in the writer's school by the number of student discipline referrals from single-parent households. Furthermore, Walberg (1984) suggested that a lack of child-parent partnership promoted low student achievement. In support of Walberg, the writer's investigation of report cards indicated poor grades.

The relationship between parental involvement and the middle school child's success was further documented by Davis (1991) who suggested a major cause of student failure was the fact that

parents and the school had not united to serve the whole child (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs), nor had they shared the responsibility for student development. In the writer's school, parents failed to show for parent conferences, meetings with the child study team, or for guidance department appointments.

Keith (1991) declared that parents could be influential factors in the amount of time students devoted to school projects and functions. Parental disinterest in the science fair, from a handful of parents, was reflected in unfinished or sloppily completed projects in the practicum setting.

Chapman (1991) maintained that another reason for unsuccessful middle school students was the breakdown of family values. On a daily basis the writer observed poor manners in the cafeteria, obscene slogans on shirts, inappropriate behavior and language toward their peers and adults, and discourteous tendencies had become abundant in the middle school. The loss of values became more pronounced when the writer phoned homes and talked with parents. The parents' tone, vocabulary, and uncaring attitude seemed to be most noticeable.

Epstein (1990) pointed out that blatant lack of parental involvement was a primary cause of dysfunctional middle school adolescents. This seemed to be the case with most discipline problems in the writer's school. The blatant lack of parental involvement was apparent in most of the repeat offenders.

Another cause, identified by Slade (1990), indicated parents were not actively engaged in the educational process. Quackenbush

(1989), preempted Slade's findings and pointed out that although students may have adequate intelligence and academic aptitude, they may lose self-esteem and might be unable to recover academically without the help of their parents. Parents who had been encouraged to become more involved with their children made an impact, as evidenced, by less disciplinary referrals and improved grades.

Although a small number of parents from the writer's school were professionals, a substantial number were not. Useem (1990) showed a direct relationship between the level of education among parents, parental integration into school affairs, and parental influence with their children's academic work. The general lack of aptitude and parenting skills was apparent to this writer at back-to-school night, at parent-teacher conferences, and during phone conversations with parents.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this writer was to involve parents in all aspects of the middle school on a more frequent basis. Parents would be encouraged to participate in parent programs, PTO, parent-teacher conferences, and to become more actively involved in an effort to support their adolescent children in areas of academics, and in their social and emotional development.

It was hoped that through the combined efforts of the writer, willing parents, students, and the school district, that this instructional design would be accomplished.

Expected Outcomes

This practicum was initiated and implemented over a period of eight months. The writer prepared the following outcomes for the practicum:

1. The PTO membership at the writer's middle school will increase by 50 families as indicated by PTO membership records.
2. At least 50 parents will attend monthly PTO meetings/programs at the school as determined from a parent sign in sheet.
3. At least 50 parents will participate in various school projects or will attend the following: assemblies, project fairs, athletic events, and class trips as determined from the sign up sheet for committees (see Appendix A).
4. At least 50 parents will work with their children on weekends and holidays to insure school work and project completion as determined from data collected from homework assignment sheets (see Appendix B).
5. At least 50 parents will contact the guidance department each month and will maintain regular communication as measured from guidance department logs, parent conferences, and telephone conferences.
6. a) The school will promote a minimum of 3 regularly scheduled programs per year, for the purpose of addressing parenting skills and cognitive and affective development in adolescents. b) At least 50 parents will attend each program as indicated on a sign in sheet.

7. a) Teachers will contact the parents of each of their students at least once during each marking period. Contact will be achieved through parent conferences, teleconferences, notes, or progress reports and substantiated by the telephone sign-in sheet for teachers, copies of the progress report, the team log for parent conferences, and use of the communication form (see Appendix C). b) Parents will contact each of their children's teachers once every marking period. This outcome will be measured by the previously described methods (approximately 125 children in 5 periods, or an average of 25 children per class).
8. A Parent Center will be established at the middle school. It will be a private area for parents who visit. The area will have comfortable furniture, hot coffee, desk with supplies, current literature, phone, and available babysitting help for parents with young children. Parent visitations will increase to at least 15 parents per month as determined by the office sign-in sheet.
9. The number of students who have been referred more than once for disciplinary reasons will decrease to 6 per month as measured by from a review of disciplinary referrals.

Measurement of Outcomes

The writer will measure the success and attainment of the expected outcomes through the following procedures.

1) PTO membership will be verified by the membership rolls. The membership from previous years will be checked against the new membership. Every effort will be made by the writer to reach out to the middle school parents and encourage their membership and involvement (see Appendix D). The writer will set up a "Telephone Membership Night" staffed by volunteers from the PTO and teachers, in an effort to call nonmembers. This outcome will be met if there is an increase in PTO membership by 50 families.

2) At the regular PTO meeting, membership roll call will be made. As new parents come to these meetings, a sign-in sheet will be circulated to document their attendance. Selected members will be assigned to introduce new members to other parents and make them feel welcome. This outcome will be met if attendance at meetings increases to 50 parents per meeting.

3) The writer will keep a log for the PTO to record those parents involved in various school projects. A separate chairperson will be appointed to maintain parental involvement within each project. Involvement could include volunteers at our "Parent Center," assemblies, class trips, school aides, or any other designated area. This outcome will be met if parental involvement in these activities increases to 50 parents.

4) Parents will be given a log (see Appendix E) to maintain when working with their children. This log will include the dates, times, comments, and subjects that were completed with their children. The writer will check the logs once every 2 weeks. This outcome will be met if 50 of the parents involved in the program keep the log on a regular basis.

5) Parent contact with the school, teachers, or guidance department will be checked by the writer. This information will be derived from office sign-in sheets, guidance department logs, and teacher records and conferences, and will include teleconferences, in-school parent conferences, and copies of any communication between the teacher, guidance department, and parent. The outcome will be met if the number of parent contacts with the school increases to 50 per month.

6) The writer plans to send personal invitations to parents about new programs focusing on cognitive and affective development in adolescents and on parenting skills. In addition, the marque in the front of the school will advertise this program as will regular newsletters and information sent home by the teachers on a weekly basis. A sign-in sheet will be kept for every program. This outcome will be met if the writer has 50 parents in attendance at each program.

7) The writer will contact every teacher and parent to encourage parental involvement and home-school communication. Communication will be verified by the teacher and parent telephone sign-in sheet, progress reports, the team log, and any other method

of correspondence. Records will be checked by the writer on a weekly basis. The writer will request copies of any communication to and from parents in an effort to monitor this information. The outcome will be met if contact is made with every parent at least 5 times during the year.

8) A Parent Center will be established. Parent and teacher volunteers will decorate an area to make it look more like a waiting room rather than a classroom. This will be a comfortable room with furniture, current literature, desk and telephone, and babysitting service for parents working on school projects, attending a parent conference, or just visiting. Parent visitations will increase as determined from the sign-in sheet in the office. This outcome will be met provided the Parent Center becomes operational.

9) The writer will graph weekly and monthly flow charts to determine the decrease in disciplinary referrals. Records will be kept by the team leader in the team log, and will be viewed by the writer once a month. This outcome was met if disciplinary referrals decrease from 11 to 6 students per month.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem was a low level of parental involvement with their middle school adolescents. Many parents of middle school students were unaware of new instructional techniques, academic issues, related technology, and did not comprehend personal and social needs of their middle school children. The writer found that a majority of the middle school parents demonstrated poor parenting skills. Many parents were in need of support programs that would help them become better informed and more involved with their children and in school activities.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested that it was no longer reasonable to assume people learn all they need to know about parenting from their own parents. Changes in family structures and increased understanding of child developmental needs, led to a growing awareness of the need for parenting services not available within many families. Many of the community groups that provided parenting education also provided social support systems. Mutual

support or self-help groups such as Parents Anonymous provided limited network support to parents adjusting to new roles or struggling with problems resulting from changes in family circumstances.

The middle school needed to provide parenting literature to assist parents in the development of skills necessary to improve communications with their adolescent children.

Parent involvement in education is a predominant theme in both popular and professional literature. Parent organizations, school officials, educators, the U.S Secretary of Education, and the President of the United States, all endorse the concept. Collaboration between the home and the school to improve the learning environment had a direct connection to adolescent achievement (Walberg, 1984). The writer intended to enhance and strengthen the collaboration between the parents and school through the implementation of parenting programs.

Epstein and McParthland (1979) stated that parent involvement and school/family cooperation are one of four key ingredients (teaching, curriculum, and setting being the other three) for excellence and improved education. Parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home when combined with the school's participation, affected the child's achievement, attitude, and aspirations even after ability and family socioeconomics were taken into consideration. Most educators have been concerned with the unfulfilled needs of students. Epstein and Becker (1982)

distinguished four types of basic needs parents should meet (see Appendix F). The needs included:

1) the basic need for food, clothing, shelter, health and safety. Gordon (1979) proposed this concept by stating that parents were expected to make their children "ready" for school. Teachers expected parents to provide "home training" in good manners, behavior, respect for authority and taking responsibility (Epstein and Becker).

2) Communication, the second type of parental involvement between the school and home, was also essential. The school had an obligation to inform parents about school programs and their children's progress.

3). The third type of parent involvement consisted of actively helping teachers and administrators. Parents through their participation in PTA's and PTO's and other school related groups assisted in related school functions. The writer helped the PTO establish a chairman for each activity and then guided these committees through successful activities.

4) The fourth type of parent involvement included assistance with learning activities in the home. Most activities were coordinated and directed by the teachers but initiated by the parents. Epstein (1985) reported on a concept, known as Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), to assist teachers who wanted to increase parental involvement in math and science activities at home. The writer, as building administrator, encouraged teachers to support these parents with the four

essential parts of TIPS: clear goals, appropriate materials, transactional communication, and evaluations. Goals and materials were supplied by the writer. Communication and evaluations were ongoing between parents and teachers. Bronfenbrunner (1979) supported the importance of shared responsibilities between teachers and parents. Schools and parents would be more effective if they worked together to achieve common goals.

In an effort to formulate possible solutions to the problem, a variety of other ideas were considered:

1) holding parent workshops on a Saturday rather than a week-day evening; 2) allotting time for an after-school period where parents would have an opportunity to receive assistance in helping their children prepare for tests or homework assignments; 3) requesting each parent to keep a journal of their involvement during the program; 4) writing articles to be published in the school district newsletter emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in developing adolescents; 5) conducting a parenting workshop, on the district professional day, open to all district parents and teachers; 6) encouraging teachers to correspond with parents through progress reports, notes, teleconferences, and parent/teacher conferences; 7) mailing informational newsletters to parents, highlighting events in the main hallway window showcase, and dating events on the outside marque.

Description of Solution Selected

The writer was prepared to implement a program that would improve parent involvement at the writer's middle school. Given the fact that many parents had demonstrated a need for consistent parenting skills and information regarding their adolescent children, several strategies had been formulated. The following components were incorporated:

1) An introductory meeting during a back-to-school night provided the first opportunity to discuss parental involvement. The meeting was used to inform parents about the need for increased parental involvement and offered new research in the field. An open dialog ensued and suggestions were taken regarding new directions.

2) Parents were asked to commit themselves to the program and interact with their children and teachers on a regular basis. The writer informed parents of the many methods of communication available to them. The writer suggested ways parents could use these methods on an ongoing basis.

3) Parents were encouraged to participate on class trips; to arrange and/or support assembly programs; to become active on one or several PTO committees; and become more involved in school activities.

4) Parents were encouraged to provide a quiet place for their children to study and to do homework, free from noise and distractions; to provide adequate supplies and necessary books and resources; and to work closely with their children on a daily basis.

5) Interaction between parents and teachers was fostered to provide opportunities for an exchange of information concerning

homework, behavior, or school projects; to open lines of communication with the guidance department; to form informal parent groups for support and sharing concerns; and to communicate with the writer as often as necessary.

6) The writer's interaction with parents during school visitations provided the perfect opportunity to discuss any problems or concerns that arose. Workshops, parent meetings and school events were other occasions that fostered writer-parent involvement. The writer met with parents in large and small group meetings several times throughout the school year. The writer found that parents were more than willing to work in order to improve their involvement and parenting skills. Parents expressed high interest in gaining an understanding of the cognitive and affective development of their adolescent children.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to implementation, the following procedures needed to be addressed:

1) A copy of the practicum proposal was distributed, by the writer, to the building principal.
2) Meetings with teachers, in small groups, were held to discuss and to encourage increased communication.
3) Information on the practicum program was distributed to

all parents, inviting them to become more actively involved.

The practicum implementation, originated during back-to-school night, was initiated at an evening PTO program. The writer led several parent-teacher discussion sessions and then reviewed, for a clearer understanding, several characteristics of adolescent behavior. The session proved to be a lively one with many parents participating and voicing concerns on many adolescent-related topics.

Parents were eager to share ideas in small group settings. Afterwards, the writer displayed one important component per group. A brief discussion then followed. The writer distributed additional information on future meetings and encouraged all parents to continue their involvement and come to these workshop meetings. Before the evening ended, the writer passed around a sign-up sheet and requested all parents to sign their names. The evening ended on a positive note as many parents left the cafeteria laughing. Within a few days, a newsletter, prepared by the writer, was sent to all parents giving details of the program and upcoming events. At this time the a Parent Volunteer Survey was mailed to the parents of every child in the writer's school along with a cover letter encouraging parents to participate in the program.

At the following PTO meeting, and the second parenting program session, the writer presented information regarding cognitive and affective development of adolescents. The writer distributed information about current research and discussed the

effects of physical and social development on a middle school adolescent. The writer presented a guest speaker, from a nearby college, who offered additional details and unique characteristics common to most adolescents. The writer led a discussion and entertained several questions from the parents. The session assisted parents in an expanded understanding of the middle school adolescent.

The writer, in the small groups setting, provided an opportunity for discussion on possible solutions to daily parenting problems and offered some light hearted stories. One parent in each group was selected as the recorder. The information, collected from all groups at the end of the session, was disseminated at the following session. Most parents eagerly participated, while others were active listeners.

The writer, attempting to accommodate nonworking parents, held the second session after school rather than in the evening. The meeting was informative and interactive with the writer serving as facilitator. Support groups were established to help parents through difficult times or assist those experiencing conflicts with their children. Problems that parents were currently experiencing were presented. Parents were directed into small groups for the purpose of exchanging ideas and engaging in dialogue for problem solving. The writer assisted in these sessions by demonstrating new techniques through role modeling dynamics. The writer asked parents to participate in the role-modeling activities. While the activities provided some light-hearted moments, two parents were so involved in their roles, that they began

to cry. Despite the emotional involvement, the session ended on a positive note. Many of the parents reached out to console the distraught participants and to offer assistance. The entire group provided a supportive atmosphere.

The following week, the writer established small parent groups and group leaders were selected. Following the selection, job descriptions were discussed with the leaders during individual conferences. Telephone conferences were conducted with those parents unable to meet with the writer. The group leaders had the responsibility of regularly contacting their members (once a week was suggested by the writer). Group leaders encouraged continued participation among parents, children, and the school, while documenting individual ideas or concerns. Ideas and concerns were presented to the writer who disseminate this information twice a month, along with current topical research.

The writer continued to make scheduled contact with group leaders and teachers and discussed recent classroom matters. All information was recorded in a journal. Pertinent information or problems were shared with all group leaders and teachers. In turn, the group leader shared the information with their individual groups. The writer closely monitor teacher/team logs to determine whether teleconferences or parent conferences were being scheduled. In one instance, 12 teleconferences were made to one parent from the four academic teachers and two related-arts teachers. This was a dramatic change since prior to implementation, this parent received only two calls from the child's teachers.

The writer made a special effort to eradicate any communication problems that arose between teachers and parents by immediately then addressing these problems. One such concern focused on a teacher who had not contacted any parents for an entire 2 week period. The writer encouraged the teacher, who insisted she had no problems, to call parents and share some of their children's positive behaviors. The writer continued to encourage all teachers to communicate with every parent, and, likewise, every parent with their childrens' teachers. The writer reviewed the communication times available to parents and teachers and then made several suggestions to alleviate preexisting communication problems. The writer further encouraged communications between teachers and parents by providing the Parent Center with donuts and coffee periodically. On several occasions, teachers came to the center to discuss issues with the parents in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. The Parent Center was a huge success in its short time of existence.

The writer provided assistance to parents experiencing additional difficulty with their children. This assistance included one-to-one conferences, counseling referrals, conferences with both the parent and child, or assistance in parent teacher conferences. The writer was careful to note these problems and their outcomes in a journal. This information was helpful as the practicum progressed. The writer also employed a flow chart to plot the discipline referrals throughout the practicum

implementation. The writer noted a marked improvement as disciplinary referrals decreased as the practicum continued.

At the subsequent evening program, the writer conducted a workshop session that focused on the school curriculum, useful teaching techniques for parents, helpful suggestions parents could use at home, and valuable homework tips. The writer prepared copies of these tips and suggestions and distributed them to the parents. The writer followed with small group discussions and challenged the groups to submit additional ideas for improved study habits. New ideas, generated from the parent groups, were added to the original list. Parental interaction gave positive reinforcement for their participation and established ownership in the process. A competitive atmosphere developed between several groups as each group tried to produce more items then their counterparts.

The writer evaluated the progress of the program at frequent intervals (see Appendix G), processed new information, and prepared a newsletter for the parents. The writer also met with all group leaders for the purpose of assessing their information. The writer reviewed the phone contact list used by teachers and the parent visitation sign-in sheet, noticing a slight improvement in the number of parent visitations.

Group leaders and teachers verbalized their concerns and suggestions during an after-school group session. This informal session was productive despite the fact that only a few teachers attended. Information was recorded at the after-school meeting and disseminated to all parents and teachers. Student progress

reports were examined, and the writer noted any comments regarding parent involvement.

Following the next scheduled PTO meeting, the writer conducted a program on improving self-esteem for middle school students. A guest speaker, the youngest of seven children and the father of five himself, highlighted the program. The writer and guest speaker presented different portions of the program, and both entertained questions from the parents following the presentation. The writer gave parents useful hints to help improve the children's self-esteem. In addition, the writer highlighted phrases and words that should be avoided for fear of damaging self-esteem in their children.

During an after school session, plans for lending school computers to needy students were finalized. The underlying idea was to assist students and parents in the completion of major school projects while affording them the experience of working on a computer. Software donated with the computers, was made available to children and parents. The writer opened the computer laboratory one night a week, between 7:00-9:00 p.m. for needy students and parents. In addition, the computer laboratory remained open for parents to come in and enjoy nonacademic programs with their children. The writer continued to chart repeat disciplinary referrals, to review team logs, to check parent visitation sheets, and to examine the telephone sheets for the extent of contact between parents and teachers.

During one evening session, the writer arranged and conducted a forum on school policies. The participants included the school

superintendent, the curriculum supervisor, the basic skills supervisor, and several department chairmen. Encouraged by the writer, some of the parent concerns previously discussed in small group sessions were raised at this time. It was obvious to the writer that the parents were much more prepared and pointed in their questioning than previously. Parents who had previously been reticent were more vocal and persistent.

At the next evening program, the writer spoke about general issues in the school, exploratory programs, the related arts program and how these issues impacted adolescent development. The curriculum supervisor assisted the writer and was able to elaborate on specific areas of the curriculum and long-range expectations. The writer concluded the session by conducting a short program about understanding the interdisciplinary philosophy and varied teaching techniques currently being used by middle school teaching teams. Several parents raised a concern that the related arts department did little to help integrate music, art, shop, and physical education into the middle school program.

On selected days and after school, the writer, assisted by classroom teachers, made available all related subject matter projects and invited parents to examine the display. This inducement encouraged parents to participate in the annual science/project fair with their children. The science/project fair proved to be the most successful ever held. There were so many projects that additional tables had to be set up in the hallways.

The subsequent PTO meeting gave the writer an opportunity to present a short overview of the basic skills program. The

presentation included state and district requirements. Another issue the writer presented information on was the topic of conflict resolution, and what parents could do to improve relationships with their children. Several student volunteers assisted the writer in role-playing for the parents. Following this short role-play, the writer initiated some thought-provoking questions that resulted in enthusiastic parental interaction. Several parents volunteered to participate in the role-playing skit themselves.

A special Saturday afternoon workshop for all parents was convened. Teachers were invited as had been the policy at the previous meetings. The writer, in collaboration with a keynote speaker, explored problem situations and solutions for parents dealing with the social, physical, and emotional needs of their adolescent children. The session was very well attended and many parents requested an additional Saturday session. During the initial Saturday workshop, the writer presented information about the physical development of the adolescent. Many parents delighted in the fact that they shared the same shoes, shirts, and even cosmetics with their children. Discussion of the social and emotional needs were not taken in a light vein. Parents acknowledged the problems their children were experiencing with peer relationships, membership in clubs/groups, and participation on athletic teams. Peer relationships raised the most questions and caused the most concern. The writer presented the parents with some ideas, then assembled the parents into small cooperative groups for further discussion. Each group was encouraged to list

several personal areas of concern. After 20 minutes, the groups were reassembled and each group presented its findings.

The writer led an after-school, small group discussion with teachers and parents on related social and emotional problems and other issues raised during previous sessions. The writer documented group concerns and challenged parents to utilize new childrearing strategies.

During the following PTO meeting, the writer suggested a plan for conducting a parent/child activity night to be held near the end of the school year. One goal was to provide a fun filled evening of activities, food, and merriment, scheduled to be held in the school gym. This event was intended to provide another avenue for parents to attend school, for the school to reach out to the parents, and for the parents to have some fun and competition with their children. Unfortunately, the writer was unable to obtain the necessary help for the night to be successful. Plans for the night had to be cancelled.

The writer met with teachers individually to discuss their success rate at contacting parents. Congratulations and a personal letter of thanks were given to those teachers who had contacted the parents of all their students during the marking period. Suggestions were given to other teachers unable to contact all parents. Team logs and telephone sheets were also reviewed by the writer.

The writer maintained an ongoing evaluation of the practicum program. Documented progress and suggestions for improvement were disseminated in a newsletter to all parents. The writer

encouraged parents to attend future program meetings and applauded their continued involvement.

During a follow-up after school session, the writer entertained suggestions from group leaders and teachers regarding programing for future meetings, newsletters, and the formation of parent support groups. The meeting lasted only 30 minutes because several group leaders had other commitments. The writer used the time to plot repeat disciplinary referrals on the graph set up in the office. Isolated problems and possible solutions were discussed. Teachers attending the meeting contributed ideas on finding possible solutions.

At another session, the writer met with selected parent teams and their group leaders. The writer focused specific attention on concerns regarding student behavior and grades. Parents were asked to recount recent problems in school and at home. With the help of the writer, workable plans were implemented. These plans included, but were not limited to, additional time spent on homework and disciplining at home. Additional research studies and information were distributed to group leaders. Group leaders, in turn, distributed the information to their teams. The writer contacted the parents on each PTO committee and encouraged additional parents to become active.

The writer presented an additional evening workshop. The evening program focused on communications between parents, teachers, and school personnel. The agenda included parent/teacher conferences, understanding progress reports, standardized tests,

and changes in teacher or parent availability. The writer discussed how to conduct productive parent/teacher conferences. The writer offered suggestions to the parents on how to prepare for parent-teacher conferences. The writer also discussed problems parents had with school personnel. Numerous complaints were made about a secretary. The writer, as building administrator, was alarmed when told about the unfriendly and discourteous manner of this school employee. Problems such as these were immediately addressed.

The next day, following the workshop session, the writer met, after school, with another selected parent team and group leader to discuss their concerns. The findings of the group meeting were documented and later shared with all the parents. At a school meeting, teachers were given the opportunity to discuss additional concerns about the parents of their students. The writer addressed both teacher and parents concerns in an attempt to resolve existing problems. Later that night, the writer conferred with the various group chairpersons on the progress of the parent/child activity night and then consulted with chairpersons of the various PTO committees regarding increased parent involvement. The writer presented the PTO chairpersons, a list of parents who had expressed a willingness to become involved in school-related activities.

The writer continued, throughout the practicum implementation, to verify the contact between parents and the school through the team logs, telephone call sheet, the Parent Center, and guidance department records. The writer met with

randomly selected students to discuss their views on parent/teacher contact and enlisted their suggestions for improvement. Although plans for a parent/child activity night had to be cancelled, the writer received input from students.

After the PTO meeting, the writer, with the assistance of the substance abuse counselor, presented a workshop entitled "What Parents Can Look For." Drug-related physical and emotional changes in behavior of their children were highlighted during this presentation. A short film about parent reaction to drug-related problems was presented. Information about local agencies, prepared to deal with adolescent substance abuse, was distributed after the meeting.

An additional after-school session for parents examined topics such as volunteering services to the school, improving communication with difficult teachers, and the value of parent attendance at athletic games, school assemblies, and class trips. Many parents voiced concern because they were working and unable to attend any games or assemblies. A counter discussion led to a request that some middle school athletic games be played at night. One limiting restriction required that assemblies had to be performed during the day for the entire student body.

In evaluating the practicum program, the writer distributed questionnaires to teachers and parents and interviewed 35 parents who participated in the program. The writer interviewed all group leaders, and included their suggestions and recommendations for additional parent sessions in all newsletters.

The writer distributed packet of pertinent information and information about research to all parents and teachers. The packets included the telephone numbers of local parent support groups. A bibliography of new articles or books, relating to parent involvement or parenting skills, was also included in the handouts.

The writer disseminated all information gathered throughout the duration of this practicum to the parents, teachers, board of education members, interested faculty members and advisors. It was the intention of the writer that the practicum would promote, encourage, and maintain consistent parental involvement in the middle school.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The writer believed that the practicum goal of having parents involved in and informed about the academic, social and emotional development of their middle school children, would be attained if several outcomes were met.

The first outcome was to increase the membership of the PTO. This outcome would have been deemed successful if PTO membership increased by 50 families. The writer used PTO membership records from the previous years for comparison. Although the target figure of 50 families was not met, an increase of 38 family memberships was realized. More parents were involved than in the previous several years as indicated by PTO membership records. Membership increased from 160 families in 1992-93 to 198 families in 1993-94. Many of the new parent enrollees actively participated in several PTO committees and functions.

The second outcome predicted at least 50 parents in attendance at regular PTO meetings. The outcome was not met. During the regularly scheduled PTO meetings, the number of parents attending increased to 35 per meeting as compared to the previous year of 24 parents.

The third outcome anticipated a minimum of 50 parents involved in a school-related activity (e.g., the school store, the "Parent Center" and PTO-related activities). The outcome was met. Parent involvement far exceeded expectations as documented in Table 1.

Table 1

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Committees

Activity	1992-93	1993-94
Dance Committee	8 members	32 members
Assembly Committee	4 members	9 members
Spring Fair Committee	12 members	38 members
Book Fair Committee	3 members	6 members
Fundraisers	6 members	14 members
Class Trip Committee	11 members	31 members
Parent Center*		12 members
School Store*		14 members
Total committee membership	44 members	156 members

This represents an increase of 112 parents from last year.

*Began in 93-94 school year as a result of Practicum II

PTO parents were elected to serve as chairmen of various functions: arranging school assemblies, ordering supplies, operating the school store, assisting at the spring fair, organizing assorted fundraisers, promoting the book fair, arranging and participating on class trips, serving as dance chaperons, and staffing the "Parent Center."

Several committees met with the writer once a month in addition to the regularly scheduled PTO meetings. The additional meetings were unexpected but greatly enhanced the practicum experience. The dedication and hard work of the committees strengthened the entire program.

The fourth outcome expected parents to increase the amount of time they spent working with their children. Parents were requested to record the dates, times spent, subjects and comments in a log provided for them by the writer. This information was checked by the writer every 2 weeks. This outcome was deemed to have been met if 50 parents, involved with the program, kept the log on a regular basis throughout the program. The outcome was met. Because the writer, in the beginning of implementation, recommended parent leaders, this outcome was further encouraged and met with success. The number of parents who participated in the completion of a log sheet has been provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of Parents Who Maintained Homework Logs

MONTH	WEEK 2	WEEK 4
1	76 Parents	72 Parents
2	53 Parents	68 Parents
3	51 Parents	48 Parents
4	42 Parents	47 Parents
5	53 Parents	67 Parents
6	48 Parents	65 Parents
7	54 Parents	63 Parents
8	65 Parents	64 Parents

The fifth outcome focused on increasing the number of parents who contacted the school. It was projected that a minimum of 50 parents would contact the school each month. The outcome was met.

Table 3

Parent/School Contacts

Method of Communication	1992-93	1993-94
Front office sign-in sheet	42	78
Parent visitation-Guidance log	41	122
Weekly progress reports, @ gd.level	22	40*
Parent/teacher conferences, @ gd.level	6	20**
Teleconferences records, @ gd.level	24	52***

*Represents 120 total per month.
**Represents 60 total per month.
***Represents 156 total per month.

The sixth outcome required at least 50 parents to attend each parent education program. This outcome was met. Scheduled programs met more than 20 times during implementation. These programs had an average of 80 parents in attendance. The writer invited several guest speakers for six of the parent programs and participated in all presentations and panel discussions with the speakers. The remaining programs were presented exclusively by the writer. The average attendance varied because the writer would schedule small, informal meetings around regularly scheduled PTO meetings. The small informal meetings, sometimes attended by only parent leaders, usually had five to six parents involved. Scheduled programs after PTO meetings would have 40 to 60 parents in attendance. These numbers increased to as many as 80 or 90 parents when special presentations and guest speakers were announced.

The seventh outcome required teachers to increase contact with parents. The outcome was met. Teachers could, and in many cases did, contact parents beyond the progress reports that were issued to all students at the midpoint of each marking period, or 4 times a year. This outcome was a direct result of the implementation. Prior to the writer's implementation, progress reports were called "failure notices" and sent only to those students in danger of failing a subject. Now progress reports are viewed as a very positive and informative contact with parents. In addition, parent contact improved and many conferences were conducted during the team meetings.

The eighth outcome was to establish a Parent Center. The outcome was met. This outcome was very difficult for the writer to achieve because it demanded space in a school already crowded. Space was at a premium in the writer's building. Four trailers were already in operation to alleviate crowded conditions. The superintendent and school business administrator twice refused recommendations by the writer. In an effort to establish a Parent Center, the writer accepted a section of the guidance office area which proved to be an excellent location for the following reasons: Parents had access to a phone, copy machine, school literature, research journals, and a comfortable sitting area. Hot coffee was always available in addition to, a desk, a typewriter and supplies. The guidance secretary assisted them with many of their needs. Although not as private as originally planned, the Parent Center was established and operated at little or no expense to the local board of education or PTO.

The ninth outcome anticipated that through improved communication and involvement between the parents and the school, that discipline referrals, specifically repeat offenders, would decrease to six students identified as receiving continuous referrals. This outcome was not met. The writer, as the assistant principal of this middle school, often spent a good portion of the day disciplining students. Students receiving additional referrals only made the job more difficult. Compared to last years discipline referral records, the writer averaged 75 referrals per month, with approximately 14 students identified as recipients of more than

one referral. Of the 14 students, several of these students received between eight and ten referrals per month.

Since implementation, the number of repeat student discipline referrals declined to and average of nine students per month. Although the projected target amount of six students was not achieved, a substantial reduction from 14 students down to 9 students, did occurred as direct result of the well-established communication network and parenting program developed, implemented, maintained, and nurtured by the writer. The number of repeat referrals per student in a calendar month has been indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

Chart of Repeat Referrals

MONTH	NUMBER OF STUDENT WHO WERE REPEAT OFFENDERS
1	10 students
2	8 "
3	6 "
4	14 "
5	9 "
6	9 "
7	7 "
8	10 "

Discussion

On several outcomes, parents and teachers exceeded the expectations of the writer. The writer was encouraged by the number of school visitations by parents that continued after implementation ended. The beginning of implementation was effective as membership increased in the PTO. Low membership had been a problem area in the writer's school for many years. As membership increased so did attendance at the PTO meetings. Parents became more active in the PTO, while others offered volunteer services to the school several hours a week. Parents now offered help on a more regular basis. Staffing the school store, or the Parent Center became easy. Parent involvement on PTO committees increased. Some committees had their own meetings scheduled. The larger committees, such as the Dance Committee, the Spring Fair Committee, and the Class Trip Committee sometimes met twice a month.

Parents were especially thankful because the program encouraged collaboration between them, their children, and teachers that had been either nonexisting or seemingly meaningless up to this time. Most parents wrote letters, phoned the office, or came in personally to thank the writer. They encouraged the principal and superintendent to make some of the activities mandatory for the next school year. Many students were especially grateful for the increased interaction with their parents during the implementation period.

Parent leaders called their group members weekly. Parents were encouraged to use the log when working with their children. During workshop sessions, PTO meetings, and through individual contact, the writer was able to personally check the logs twice a month. The writer encountered difficulties with some parents keeping logs. In some cases, the logs were cumbersome to a few parents. Others lost their logs periodically. Some parents forgot to use the logs during the holidays, and some completely refused to participate in the log strategy. However, the logs kept most parent on schedule and encouraged them to work with their children.

Parent contact with the school became prominent. Contact time included parent conferences, teleconferences, and written communication between the school and parents. Parents, teachers, and guidance counselors were encouraged to contact each other on a regular basis, not just when problems arose. Teacher teams were required to confer with the parents of every child in their classes. In addition to regular ongoing conferences, teachers and parents were encouraged to call whenever they had a concern or were unclear about a directive. Finally, parents and teachers were urged to use weekly written progress reports for at-risk students.

The development of a parenting skills program was one of the most successful outcomes and was personally satisfying to the parents and the writer. During special presentations 80 to 90 parents would attend. Although the number of parents in attendance was gratifying to the writer, the establishment of a parenting program received the most attention

from parents, teachers, administrators and nearby school districts. Numerous requests were made to the writer to help establish and to implement a similar program in other school districts.

The more effective use of the progress report improved communication between parents and teachers.
Teacher teams also had parents come in for conferences more often. These two improvements gave parents and teachers more opportunity to exchange vital information. The increase was verified by team leaders and the team log. Teleconferences with parents improved. Teachers were required to log all calls to parents. The writer continued to make suggestions and recommendations to improve communications. As an outgrowth of this effort, short notes issued by teachers such as "happy notes" or "good news referral" and "something good happened today" began to go home. Parents commented to the writer on many occasions their pleasure in receiving these notes. Many notes remain stuck to the refrigerator as positive reinforcement. In some cases these notes were the first positive communication or the only positive communication their children received. Parents were grateful and suggested that more teachers use the notes.

Establishing a place for the Parent Center was difficult for the writer. Due to many state mandates, finding space in any middle school is almost impossible. The writer did concede, when pressured from the superintendent, to modify the request. The Parent Center was established in the guidance office at no cost to the PTO.

The final outcome, which focused on reducing repeat referrals, met with partial success. The result was fewer repeat referrals but not the expected decrease in behavioral referrals.

For the parents, many new friendships were cultivated during the group interaction and scheduled parenting sessions. As the news traveled, parents and teachers from other school districts inquired about the program. They wanted to know whether it was possible to have a similar program implemented in their school district next year. The guidance department at the high school remained interested in implementing the program on a larger scale for all high school students.

Recommendations

One suggested way of evaluating any program would be to conduct a longitudinal study to determine if the positive short term effects could be maintained over long periods of time. Such an evaluation was not possible given the time constraints of the practicum format. However, the writer recommends that, in the interest of determining the efficacy of the program over time, that the program should be continued and evaluated for the next several years.

The writer recommends that the program should be continued and expanded to both elementary schools and the high school next year. In addition, the writer proposes the use of parents familiar with the program, to help facilitate small group parenting

activities. Their understanding will help others become more easily acquainted with the program procedures.

As a final recommendation, the writer urges faculty members from other district schools, interested in implementing the program, to contact the parents recently involved in the program and have them speak with new parents. These parents would encourage others through small group discussion, coordination of parent workshops, participation on panel discussions, and dissemination of information at PTO meetings. Administrators should make every effort to enlist parental help whenever possible. Several parents expressed an interest in expanding the program and offered to take on additional leadership responsibilities, along with the writer, to make the program successful.

The writer will propose that the program be incorporated as new school policy for improved parent involvement. In addition, a copy of the practicum report will be donated to both elementary schools and to the guidance department of the high school. The writer plans to prepare several articles for publication which describe, in detail, the program and the positive effects on students, parents, and the school community.

Finally, the writer will volunteer time to encourage, develop and implement such a program for any school.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT VOLUNTEER SURVEY

APPENDIX A
PARENT VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Name_____ Telephone_____

Address_____

Would you be willing to volunteer your time? _____

Do you know how to type?_____

Can you file?_____

Would you be willing to work in the following area:

Cafeteria_____ Computer Lab_____

Copy Center_____ Principals Office_____

Classroom_____ V-P Office_____

Crowd Control_____ Guidance_____

Parent Center_____ Other_____

When is the best time to call?_____

How many hours could you volunteer?_____

What days could you volunteer?_____

Could your spouse volunteer?_____

If so, in what area?_____

Is there a retired person living with you who would like to be a volunteer?_____

APPENDIX B

WEEKLY HOMEWORK CHART

APPENDIX B

WEEKLY HOMEWORK CHART

SUBJECT	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
LANGUAGE ARTS					
READING					
MATH					
SCIENCE					
SOCIAL STUDIES					
PARENT COMMENTS:					

APPENDIX C

COMMUNICATION FORM

APPENDIX C

COMMUNICATION FORM

Date contacted_____

Name of student_____ Name of Parent_____

Reason for contact_____

Request by parent_____

New or pertinent information_____

Phone call requested_____

Parent conference requested_____

Follow up by parent_____

Suggestions_____

Previous contact made_____

Guidance contacted and date_____

APPENDIX D

PARENT PRETEST QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX D

PARENT PRETEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please use the following corresponding descriptors to best describe your feelings:

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

1. Do you spend at least 30 mins. a day with your child on school related assignments, discussing problems, or just talking?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Do you provide adequate support when your child is depressed about school work, or a friendship?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Do you make a strong effort to provide a quiet place to do homework, that is free from distractions?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Are you committed to assisting your child on weekends, holidays, and extended vacations?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you follow up when you see something wrong with school work or an assignment?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Do you call the teacher first?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Do you attempt to find information using the buddy system?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Do you attend games, assemblies, class trips when you are asked?

1 2 3 4 5

9. Have you kept good contact with your child's teacher in the past?

1 2 3 4 5

10. Did you volunteer for PTO functions?

1 2 3 4 5

11. Did you ever participate in a parent program like this before?

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX E

PARENT LOG SHEET

APPENDIX E

PARENT LOG SHEET

	DATE	TIME SPENT	SUBJECT	COMMENTS
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

APPENDIX F

TYPES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

APPENDIX F

TYPES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Basic Obligations of Parents

   To provide food, clothing, shelter
   To assure health and safety
   To provide child rearing and home training
   To provide school supplies, place for school work
   To build positive home conditions for learning

2. School-to-Home Communications

   To inform parents about the school: calendars and schedules; special events; channels of communication; school goals, programs, services; school rules, codes, policies, "open house"

   To inform parents about their children: report card grades, test scores; informal evaluations, teacher-parent conferences

3. Parent Involvement at the School

   To assist teachers and students with lessons, on class trips, at class parties or other classroom activities

   To assist administrators, teachers, and staff in school cafeteria, library, computer labs, other school activities

   To assist organized parent groups in fund-raising, community relations, political awareness, program development

   To attend students' assemblies, sports events, special presentations

   To attend workshops, discussion groups, training sessions for parents

4. Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

   To develop child's social and personal skills
   To contribute to basic skills education
   To contribute to advanced skills and enrichment education

APPENDIX G

EVALUATION FROM PARENTS

APPENDIX G

EVALUATION FROM PARENTS

Answer each question by circling Yes or No. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Were you consistent with the time you spent with your child doing school assignments, attending games, and other related school activities?	yes	no
2. Do you feel you have improved your personal relationship with your child through your involvement with this program?	yes	no
3. Do you believe you have improved the relationship with the teacher and/or the school?	yes	no
4. Would you suggest this program to other parents?	yes	no
5. Do you think the amount of time spent at these sessions was enough?	yes	no
6. Before this program, do you think the contact you had with your child was adequate?	yes	no
7. Before this program, do you think the contact with the teacher was enough?	yes	no
8. Would you suggest this program be enacted on a regular basis, year-round?	yes	no
9. Have you noticed an improvement in your child's self esteem?	yes	no
10. Has you child become accustomed to more parental involvement?	yes	no

11. Do you feel more involved with the school, the teaching staff, and administrators? yes no

12. Have you dedicated this much time before with your child or volunteering at the school? yes no

13. Would you participate in a similar program again if it were offered? yes no

14. Would you participate in a discussion panel, or a committee in an effort to help other parents? yes no

15. Do you think this program had a positive effect on all those who were involved? yes no

16. Has this program changed your thinking in any way about your child's teacher, school, or PTO? yes no

Please list any comments, suggestions, recommendations, or pertinent information on the other side of this form. Thank you.